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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 4354
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3173
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9937
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RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0365
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2342
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY 0253
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6866
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4724
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RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001528

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MFA OFFERS READ-OUT OF PEACE
NEGOTIATOR'S MEETING WITH NORWEGIAN FACILITATORS

REF: COLOMBO 1517

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On September 15, Ambassador Blake met with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Additional Secretary Geetha de Silva, MFA Legal Advisor Rohan Perera, and Peace Secretariat Director Shanaka Jayasekara at their request. The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) interlocutors briefed the Ambassador (and other Co-Chair Chiefs of Mission Separately) on a September 14 discussion between Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar and Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva (no relation), head of the GSL's peace delegation in previous talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). According to the MFA representatives, Minister de Silva told Ambassador Brattskar that the GSL "is firmly committed to resuming talks with the LTTE at the earliest." Minister de Silva also told Brattskar that the GSL seeks a commitment from LTTE leader Prabhakaran on two points: the LTTE must enter into talks with a genuine intent to negotiate a lasting peace, and the Tigers must commit to a verifiable, comprehensive cessation of all violence. The MFA's de Silva explained that the GSL delegation to Oslo in June had been badly embarrassed when the LTTE pulled out of talks at the last minute. She added that when Prabhakaran committed to ceasing hostilities to then-Peace Envoy Erik Solheim prior to talks in Geneva in February, the Tigers actually refrained from violence.

¶2. (C) The MFA officials said that Ambassador Brattskar had accepted Minister de Silva's comments as official notification to the facilitator, and he would convey the comments to the LTTE. However, Brattskar was reportedly unable to reach any LTTE representatives by phone since returning to Colombo from the Co-Chairs meeting. Ambassador Blake reiterated US support for the peace process and for the Norway as the facilitator, and he called on the GSL to seize on this "significant opportunity for peace" and to demonstrate statesmanship, whatever obstacles might arise.

¶3. (C) Minister de Silva also registered some objections to the September 13 Co-Chairs (US, EU, Norway, and Japan) statement with Ambassador Brattskar, MFA representatives said. The GSL would have preferred to be consulted before

the Norwegians announced a prospective date and time for the peace talks, if only to ensure the feasibility of timing. Ambassador Brattskar replied that the LTTE had contacted peace envoy Erik Solheim and expressed a willingness to negotiate; since the GSL has always professed a readiness to hold talks, the Norwegians wanted to create an opportunity as expediently as possible, he said. Ambassador Blake told the MFA group that the Co-Chairs had merely suggested a time and place and had included wording in the statement noting that the proposed date and venue of the talks were subject to the agreement of both parties. He reiterated that there had been no attempt by the Co-Chairs to dictate terms to either side.

¶4. (C) The GSL also had objections to the Co-Chairs' language in describing the bombing of the Mullaithivu school, Jayasekera said. According to him, Minister de Silva told Ambassador Brattskar that the use of the word "school" was inappropriate to describe the facility that GSL forces bombed. Jayasekera called the facility "an LTTE installation," noting that it was not accredited by the Ministry of Education, though local students may have been taken there for "LTTE training." Jayasekera said that Ambassador Brattskar told Minister de Silva that the statement came from all of the Co-Chair representatives, and he alone could not provide a clarification.

¶5. (C) Comment: The GSL's requests from the LTTE seem reasonable, especially in light of the fact that a previous commitment from Prabhakaran brought about the desired result of minimizing LTTE violence. It remains to be seen how the unpredictable Tigers will respond, however. As reported reftel, the Norwegians will seek a meeting with the LTTE for

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next week to get their responses to those questions. The MFA's real purpose in calling in the Co-Chair Chiefs of Mission may have been to appease Sinhalese nationalist hard-liners such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Party by publicizing the fact that the GSL formally registered objections to parts of the Co-Chair statement. End comment.
BLAKE